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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Procurement reform

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 52/226 of 27 April 1998. The Secretary-General is pleased to report that measures implemented following the recommendations and suggestions of the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and oversight bodies have significantly strengthened the transparency, competitiveness and fairness of the procurement system in the United Nations. In addition, the recommendations of the High-level Group of Experts on Procurement have been fully acted upon. The Secretary-General firmly believes that reform is an ongoing process and intends to take further action to improve the United Nations procurement system.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 52/226 of 27 April 1998. It provides information on the developments and accomplishments achieved in the area of procurement reform pursuant to the recommendations, decisions, suggestions and concerns expressed by the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the oversight bodies, as well as the High-level Group of Experts on Procurement. The Secretary-General believes that the report reflects the strong commitment of the Under-Secretary-General for Management and the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services in ensuring that the United Nations procurement system is effective, efficient, transparent and fully responsive to the needs of the Organization. The Secretary-General recognizes that the achievements to date notwithstanding, procurement reform is an ongoing process requiring constant attention. In this respect, and as set forth more fully in paragraph 24 below, the ongoing procurement reform, including the reorganization of the Procurement Division, will address strategic and policy issues as well as procurement operations, thus ensuring an integrated approach to the realization of the enhanced procurement functions within the United Nations. The Secretary-General's responses to the issues raised by the General Assembly are provided in the same order as the paragraphs in resolution 52/226 for ease of reference.

II. The Secretary-General's comments

"1. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General to ensure strict adherence to the regulations and rules governing the procurement process"

2. The Secretary-General wishes to reassure the General Assembly that he has mandated strict adherence to the regulations and rules governing the procurement process. Furthermore, whenever an exception is sought, whether specifically enumerated or otherwise, full justification must be provided and approved by the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services or other officials duly authorized under financial rule 110.16 (b), and this will be reflected in the Procurement Manual. Finally, the Secretary-General wishes to note that the Organization's procurement activities receive close scrutiny by the various oversight bodies on a continuous basis, thus ensuring adherence.

"2. *Notes with concern* that its resolution 51/231 and a number of the recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Group of Experts on Procurement remain largely unimplemented, and therefore, calls on the Secretary-General to ensure their full implementation without any further delay"

3. The Secretary-General notes that, as indicated in paragraph 2 of his report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/C.5/51/9, dated 29 November 1996), he had already taken into account all relevant recommendations made by the independent High-level Group of Experts on Procurement. Of the 27 recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Experts, 19 had been accepted and implemented by then; 5 had been deemed inadvisable for the reasons specified in his report (for example, the recommendation that public bid openings be stopped was considered inconsistent with the Organization's goal of promoting transparency in procurement); and only 3 recommendations were then pending. Subsequently 2 additional recommendations were implemented: (a) the functional responsibility for procurement on behalf of the Department of Development Support and Management Services (now part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) was transferred to the Procurement Division effective February 1998; and (b) the recommendation that a larger imprest be given to sector levels in field missions to use for day-to-day requirements was referred to the Director of the Field Administration and Logistics Division for appropriate action in consultation with the Controller. Accordingly, as at 27 April 1998, the date of General Assembly resolution 52/226, only one recommendation was still under consideration, namely, recommendation 27, that an independent complaint bureau/supplier relations manager (i.e., "ombudsman") be appointed. However, as is discussed in connection with item 25 below, measures had already been taken to address the issue raised in that recommendation.

"3. *Notes* that the revised procurement manual has not been issued, and requests the Secretary-General to publish the manual no later than 31 March 1998, as stated in his report"

4. The Secretary-General is pleased to confirm that the revised Procurement Manual (version 01) dated 31 March 1998 has been issued. Moreover, the Secretary-General wishes to observe that the Under-Secretary-General for Management has written to all permanent missions advising them of the availability of the Manual. Finally, it should be noted that the revised Manual will be made available on the

Intranet so that, to the maximum extent practicable, all United Nations offices, at and away from Headquarters, may access and/or print it, as necessary.

"4. *Also notes* the delay in submission of proposals for revision of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, which may be necessary to facilitate the implementation of the procurement reform process, and requests the Secretary-General to submit such proposals to the General Assembly, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for consideration by the Assembly at the second part of its resumed fifty-second session"

5. The Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations govern all procurement activities for which the Secretary-General has administrative responsibility. Regulation 10.5 as well as rules 110.16 to 110.24 and 110.35 to 110.37 pertain to procurement activities. As the General Assembly is aware, while it revises and adopts new regulations, the Secretary-General revises and adopts new rules. The last time the regulations and rules were published in their entirety was in 1985 (ST/SGB/Financial Rules/1/Rev.3). However, modifications and amendments to the rules have been made since then, most recently in July 1996. At that time, the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Administration and Management (since renamed the Department of Management) increased the thresholds for procurement at and away from Headquarters, pursuant to the recommendations of the High-level Group of Experts on Procurement. The Under-Secretary-General for Management has also undertaken, and is presently completing, a comprehensive review of all of the United Nations regulations and rules with the intention that a revised document (ST/SGB/Financial Rules/Rev.4) will be issued by the Secretary-General during the term of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. With respect to procurement within the framework of common services, the United Nations, together with its funds and programmes, is presently harmonizing appropriate regulations and rules. Proposed new regulations are being submitted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund to their respective executive boards through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The United Nations Office for Project Services will also be presenting similar regulations in the near future.

"5. Requests the Secretary-General, in the context of his next report on procurement reform, to evolve and provide the standards for measuring the efficiency of procurement, taking into account the optimal duration of the procurement decision-making process, the total workload in the Procurement Division of the Secretariat and the cost-efficiency of procurement, against which the performance should be measured"

6. The Secretary-General recognizes that the main aim of procurement reform is to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the procurement function. This is also under consideration by the Task Force on Common Services. As explained elsewhere in the present report, a number of initiatives are being taken to improve operations in the entire supply chain, that is, in the Procurement Division and other units involved in the procurement function. These include better procurement planning by requisitioning units, streamlining the procurement process in the Procurement Division and by the Headquarters Committee on Contracts and making necessary changes to the procurement framework, including regulations, rules and refinements in the Procurement Manual. Establishment of valid and worthwhile standards can only be achieved when considering the entirety of the supply chain. Focusing on the Procurement Division in isolation from other components of the chain would not achieve the desired objectives. Meanwhile, the Secretary-General would like to inform the General Assembly of the results of a comparison of operating costs within the Procurement Division (salaries, equipment and supplies) with the volume of procurement undertaken against those costs. For calendar year 1997, the Organization spent approximately $6.2 million against a total procurement value of $328 million. Accordingly, the cost of procurement amounted to 1.9 per cent.

"6. *Notes* the decline in *ex post facto* cases, and underscores the need to reduce further the number of such cases through better procurement planning"

7. The Secretary-General appreciates the recognition that has been accorded to his efforts at reducing *ex post facto* and partially *ex post facto* cases to an absolute minimum. As the table reveals, for calendar years 1995, 1996 and 1997 as well as for the first six months of 1998, the total number of *ex post facto* and partial *ex post facto* cases have declined

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Year	*Number of cases*	*(5) + (6)*	*Percentage of (5) + (6)*	*Number of partial ex post facto cases*	*Number of ex post facto cases*	*Value of cases*	*Percentage value of partial ex post facto cases*	*Percentage value of ex post facto cases*	*Percentage of (8) + (9)*
1995	1 058	500	47.38	296 (28.10%*)	204 (19.28%*)	$1 118 198 195	31.87	18.81	50.68
1996	553	226	40.87	127 (22.97%*)	99 (17.90%*)	$528 000 975	18.28	14.32	32.6
1997	412	71	17.23	38 (9.22%*)	33 (8.01%*)	$360 729 605	7.70	5.28	12.98
1998 (1 Jan –30 June)	122	11	9.02	5 (4.10%*)	6 (4.92%*)	$148 066 683	9.58	4.96	14.54

* Percentage of total number of cases

dramatically, from 47.4 per cent in 1995 to 9 per cent for the first six months of 1998 and, by dollar value, from 50.68 per cent for 1995 to 14.54 per cent for the first six months of 1998.

8. In this connection, the Secretary-General respectfully refers the General Assembly to his statements in paragraphs 39 and 40 of document A/C.5/51/9, as follows:

> "39. The Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services and the Assistant Secretary-General for Planning and Support, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, have been working very closely to eliminate, to the maximum extent possible, delayed presentations to the Headquarters Committee on Contracts, simply as *ex post facto* cases, without any justification.
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> "40. It should be noted, however, that while further improvements will be achieved, all *ex post facto* or partial *ex post facto* cases cannot be eliminated totally. In some cases, for example, a mandate of a particular mission is either established or extended on extremely short notice, and legally no contractual commitments can be made before then. In some cases arrangements through letters of assist are used for the transportation of troops by Governments using their own national carriers to meet operational requirements, prior to internal United Nations approvals being obtained. *Ex post facto* cases also occur as a result of liquidation of missions, such as the United Nations Protection Force and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda. Hence, *ex post facto* cases cannot be eliminated altogether. However, as previously noted, all officials concerned have been directed to explain fully, and to justify each case in writing, bearing in mind their respective full accountability for their actions. The new procedures will be strictly monitored and enforced."

Management will continue to monitor these cases assiduously.

> **"7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that all departments and offices at Headquarters and in the field develop, in cooperation with the Procurement Division, annual procurement plans, which should be made publicly available"**

9. The Secretary-General agrees that procurement planning is essential for the effective and timely solicitation of bids or proposals, the award of contracts and the delivery of required goods and services. As the General Assembly is aware, all offices at and away from Headquarters are responsible for developing biennial procurement plans in connection with their biennial budgets, which are presented to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee. The Field Administration and Logistics Division, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, is also responsible for such procurement planning on behalf of peacekeeping operations. Commencing with the next biennium, the Secretary-General has instructed all such offices to abstract from their approved budgets all major procurement items so that the Procurement Division may make information on such anticipated procurement public. However, it must be understood that such public disclosure shall not constitute a commitment on the part of the Organization to effect the purchase of any or all such items.

"8. *Emphasizes* the need for a sharper definition of exigency needs, and urges the Secretary-General to submit his proposal to the General Assembly, through the Advisory Committee, no later than 31 March 1998, as stated in his report"

10. Under financial rule 110.19,

> "Contracts may be awarded without calling for proposals, advertising or formal invitations to bid when: ... (*d*) The exigency of the service does not permit the delay attendant upon the issue of invitations to bid or the calling for proposals".

Exceptions to bidding on the basis of exigency will be approved by the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services where the proposed procurement is both unavoidable and would either seriously interfere with or impede the operation of a programme or mission mandate or would endanger lives or property were it to remain unsatisfied for even a short period of time. In all such cases, full justification must be presented by the requisitioning department. While a bona fide exigency can occur at any time, whether at or away from Headquarters, it most commonly occurs in peacekeeping operations during the following periods: mission inception, when the issuance of a new mission mandate by the Security Council requires the deployment of significant numbers of troops or civilian personnel in a very short period of time which does not provide sufficient time for normal processing of requisitions; and mission expansion, where there is an unanticipated significant change in the mission's mandate requiring the introduction of substantial additional troops or civilian personnel and/or the prompt performance of unexpected and initially unfunded operations. In addition to the above, a bona fide exigency can also result when the supply of goods or services ceases abruptly, for example, due to the vendor's negligence or wilful default, the vendor's insolvency or other cessation of business, the existence of a business or contractual dispute between the vendor and the United Nations, governmental regulations or restrictions or a severe market shortage of the required goods; or upon the occurrence of an event constituting *force majeure*, for example, acts of God, war (whether declared or not), invasion, revolution, insurrection or other acts of a similar nature or force. The above text supersedes the text of document A/C.5/52/46 of 28 April 1998, section I, entitled "Sharper definition of exigency", and will soon be issued as a new administrative instruction and reflected in the Procurement Manual.

"9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to consider measures to improve the working methods of the Headquarters Committee on Contracts in order to enhance and expedite the procurement decision-making process"

11. The Secretary-General respectfully refers the General Assembly to the fourth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/51/7/Add.3 of 4 December 1996), in which, in paragraph 16, the Advisory Committee welcomed the Secretary-General's report outlining the working methods of the Headquarters Committee on Contracts, including the policy guidelines for categories of cases to be submitted to the Headquarters Committee, its composition, general functions and meetings, as well as the *ex post facto* presentations to it. It should be noted that such guidelines were attached as an annex to the report and had been fully implemented as from 1 March 1996. The Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services shall continue to monitor and review the entire spectrum of the procurement process, from timely submission of requisitions through final review and approvals, with a view to further expediting the delivery of goods and services to the Organization. Finally, the Secretary-General should like to observe that the Headquarters Contract Committee is and should remain an advisory body providing advice to the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services and such other officials duly authorized under financial rule 110.16 (b). This demarcation of responsibilities is critical in ensuring that the ultimate procurement decisions are made by a senior programme manager who is independent of the various requisitioning departments and who can provide an Organization-wide perspective on United Nations procurement needs.

"10. *Regrets* that the report of the Secretary-General does not contain information on the action taken regarding guidelines on methods of invitation to bid, which was recommended by the Board of Auditors in its report on procurement for the biennium ended 31 December 1995, and requests the Secretary-General to submit the guidelines, through the Advisory Committee, for consideration by the General Assembly at the second part of its resumed fifty-second session"

12. The Secretary-General should like to observe that, in 1995, the Procurement Division had abolished its old supplier roster and was in the process of requesting purged suppliers to reapply and simultaneously inviting new applicants to apply, as recommended by the High-level

Group of Experts on Procurement. The Secretary-General is pleased to inform the General Assembly that the evaluation criteria and procedures for registration of vendors were established in early 1996, and that they have been incorporated into section 5 of the revised Procurement Manual. The second part of this recommendation relates to the actions taken regarding guidelines on methods of invitation to bid. Again, the Secretary-General wishes to inform the General Assembly that such guidelines were established in early 1996, and that they have been incorporated into section 6 of the revised Procurement Manual.

> **"11. *Also regrets* that the information requested in paragraphs 18 and 37 of its resolution 51/231 was not provided in the report of the Secretary-General, and emphasizes that immediate action should be taken for the full implementation of the resolution"**

13. The Secretary-General acknowledges that, as recommended by the General Assembly, he has asked the Office of Internal Oversight Services to conduct an investigation into the insufficient use of expertise in procurement planning, which led to the payment for aircraft services not utilized and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session on its findings and recommendations. This investigation is still in progress.

> **"12. *Further regrets* that, despite the initial efforts of the Secretary-General, the supplier roster is still not representative of the membership of the Organization, and requests him to intensify further and focus his efforts to broaden the geographical base of the supplier roster"**

14. The Secretary-General respectfully refers the General Assembly to paragraphs 16 to 23 of his previous report (document A/52/534 and Corr.1 of 27 October 1997), in which he set forth in detail the intensified efforts he has undertaken to establish the United Nations supplier roster on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Indeed, the Secretary-General noted that he was fully committed and had spared no effort to achieve that goal, and he wished to reassure the Assembly of his continuing commitment in that regard. The number of provisionally and fully registered vendors has increased from 2,989 in 1997, representing 79 countries, to 3, 946 in 1998, representing 91 countries. Notwithstanding that progress, the Secretary-General firmly believes that further improvements are possible, and he shall continue to insist that every effort be made towards that end. He has thus instructed the Procurement Division to attend, whenever possible, business seminars, exhibitions, trade fairs and other group meetings with interested suppliers and representatives from Member States so as to engender interest in, as well as to provide guidance on, doing business with the United Nations. Finally, the Secretary-General wishes to inform the Assembly that the United Nations is working with other organizations in the United Nations system to establish a common supplier database, whereby the participating organizations will share information on suppliers, including supplier performance evaluations. It is expected that the use of the database will increase the efficiency of the Procurement Division as well as expand the list of potential qualified suppliers from around the world from which it may solicit bids and proposals.

> **"13. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take all possible measures to increase procurement from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, including the following measures: (a) all invitations to bid should be posted on the Procurement Division Web site home page as soon as they are prepared, in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations; (b) all invitations to bid should be sent to permanent missions, as well as to all United Nations information centres and other United Nations offices; (c) Procurement Division officials may undertake visits to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to attend seminars and exhibitions, with a view to identifying potential vendors from those countries; (d) all commercial opportunities should be published in *Development Business**..."**

15. The Secretary-General agrees with the general thrust of this request. Moreover, as he has already noted, in paragraph 17 of document A/52/534 and Corr.1, that efforts were being made to identify potential vendors in developing countries and in countries with economies in transition, and to increase the representation from those countries in the bidding for and award of contracts. Details of efforts to develop a supplier roster with as wide a geographical base as possible had been provided in a previous report on procurement (A/C.5/51/9, paras. 18-27). With respect to the specific recommendations set forth in the resolution, the Secretary-General wishes to note that all procurement in

* Published by the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat.

excess of $200,000 (the threshold required for review by the Headquarters Committee on Contracts) is now being advertised by the Procurement Division on its Web site home page, whenever adequate lead time is provided by the requisitioning department. In addition, such advertisements will be transmitted electronically to all permanent missions in New York that have on-line capabilities and to all United Nations information centres throughout the world. In this connection, the permanent missions have already been contacted for their e-mail addresses, and those that have not yet responded are respectfully encouraged to do so. Permanent missions are also requested to advise qualified suppliers from their respective countries to contact the Procurement Division immediately so that any unregistered vendors can proceed to obtain a registration application, seek to qualify for inclusion on the supplier roster, and thus become eligible to receive formal bid documents and to compete for United Nations procurement. It is expected that advance notice on anticipated procurement activities, as referred to in paragraph 9 above, will also broaden the pool of potential suppliers. The Secretary-General also wishes to note that, since his previous report was issued, in October 1997, officials of the Procurement Division have attended business seminars, exhibitions and trade fairs in 13 countries, including the host country. Finally, the Secretary-General notes that *Development Business* is published bimonthly and, to the extent that adequate lead time is provided by the requisitioning departments, all procurement in excess of $200,000 is also published in that paper.

> **"14. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to examine ways to increase opportunities for developing countries in the award of procurement contracts, in particular least developed countries, African countries and countries with economies in transition, taking into account the experience of preferential treatment in this regard in the funds and programmes of United Nations organizations and other intergovernmental institutions, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session"**

16. The Secretary-General acknowledges the need to reconcile the goal of increasing procurement opportunities for vendors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition with the need to obtain goods and services for the Organization based upon principles of economy and efficiency. In attempting to resolve this issue, the Secretary-General, as suggested by the General Assembly, has reviewed and considered the experience of UNDP in according preferential treatment to such vendors. Having done so, the Secretary-General wishes to report that the UNDP experiment produced no tangible results and that the Executive Board ultimately abandoned it after a number of years. Moreover, as suggested at informal sessions, the Procurement Division has also contacted the World Bank, which has advised that it, too, does not have such a policy of providing preferential treatment in its procurement practices. Accordingly, the Secretary-General believes that the most appropriate and practical way to increase the participation of vendors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the award of United Nations procurement is through their enrolment in the supplier roster.

> **"15. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to examine the possibility of awarding procurement contracts to equally qualified vendors from countries that are current in the payment of their assessed contributions, taking into account the experience of other intergovernmental institutions with such practices, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session"**

17. The Secretary-General does not believe, as a policy matter, that he should take a position on this proposal. He would like to note, however, that as a practical matter such practice could clearly have negative, and at times unintended, consequences for the Organization, including the disruption of services and the escalation of costs. The Secretary-General thus respectfully suggests that the General Assembly consider the matter further.

> **"16. *Requests* the Secretary-General to develop a standard procedure for the preparation of performance evaluation reports on suppliers, as requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 15 of its resolution 51/231"**

18. The Secretary-General agrees with this recommendation. Accordingly, effective 1 October 1998, all requisitioning departments will be required to complete a supplier performance report. Such supplier performance reports must be completed at appropriate intervals during as well as at the completion of the contract, and promptly returned to the Procurement Division. The information will eventually be recorded electronically and shared throughout the United Nations system through the common supplier database referred to in paragraph 14 above.

"17. *Reiterates* its concern about the use of suppliers recommended by requisitioners and, noting that this practice undermines the principle of segregation of responsibilities between requesting and procurement entities, requests the Secretary-General to discontinue the practice"

19. The Secretary-General agrees that requisitioning departments or offices should not, as a general rule, recommend suppliers. Such practice undermines the basic principle of segregation of responsibilities between the requisitioning and procurement entities and may create an appearance of conflict of interest. Thus, when such a recommendation is received by the Procurement Division (which should be in exceptional circumstances only), the procurement officer must carefully evaluate and scrutinize the desirability and propriety of including the recommended supplier on the invitee list. However, unless the procurement officer is fully satisfied that the recommended supplier will bring special knowledge or expertise that will be beneficial to the proposed procurement as opposed to being merely an addition to an already satisfactory and sufficient list of potential invitees, the recommended supplier should be excluded. Where, however, the procurement officer believes that such a supplier should be invited to tender, then the concurrence of the Chief of the Procurement Division must first be obtained. In addition, no consultant who has been engaged to prepare or review technical specifications or otherwise to assist in the evaluation of bids or proposals should be allowed to recommend any suppliers for the proposed procurement or itself to tender any bids or proposals.

"18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to revise paragraphs (*f*) and (*g*) of financial rule 110.19 to include professional services, medicines, medical supplies, hospital or surgical supplies and prosthetic appliances in the open bidding process"

20. The Secretary-General wishes to advise the General Assembly, that this request has been fully implemented effective April 1998.

"19. *Emphasizes* that the procurement of goods and services in the field missions could be sourced competitively at the local or regional level"

21. The Secretary-General respectfully refers the General Assembly to paragraphs 10 and 11 of his report contained in document A/C.5/51/9 and to paragraph 28 of document A/52/534 and Corr.1, in which he noted that the thresholds for the delegation of local procurement authority for offices away from Headquarters, including peacekeeping missions, were increased effective 15 August 1996. Such revised delegations of authority gave local committees on contracts the increased authority to consider cases ranging from $50,000 to $200,000, whereas the prior thresholds, although varying in amount, were generally limited to procurement valued at less than $70,000. Increasing such thresholds was designed to encourage and facilitate local procurement and to address the General Assembly's concerns in that regard. Moreover, the Secretary-General would like to observe that, concomitantly, those delegations of authority were revised so as to permit such procurement to be effected not only from a limited local procurement area, but on a worldwide basis from any Member or Observer State.

"20. *Notes* the progress made in the area of staff training, and requests the Secretary-General to develop further a formal training programme for all procurement staff"

22. The Secretary-General appreciates the recognition of the progress that has been made in the area of staff training. In this regard, the Secretary-General would like to observe that such training has been intensified so that, during the past six months, procurement officers were afforded the opportunity to attend 10 separate seminars on such varied matters as cost and price analysis, personnel management, conflict resolution, including arbitration, and the United Nations Integrated Management Information System/Reality computerized procurement system.

"21. *Reiterates its decision* that all procurement-related functions should be performed only by United Nations staff, and requests the Secretary-General to phase out gratis personnel from the Procurement Division expeditiously, and no later than 31 July 1998"

23. The Secretary-General is pleased to inform the General Assembly that all five gratis personnel seconded to the Procurement Division by the Governments of France, Ireland, Norway, Spain and the United States of America have been phased out effective 15 July 1998. The Secretary-General is most appreciative of the very valuable assistance provided to the Division by the Governments concerned.

"22. *Requests* the Secretary-General to review the organizational structure of the Procurement Division in order to ensure effective and efficient management, taking into account the implementation of procurement reform, including the recommendations contained in the reports of the Advisory Committee, the Board of Auditors and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and to report thereon, through the Advisory Committee, to the General Assembly"

24. The Secretary-General wishes to observe that ongoing review and revision of the organizational structure of the Procurement Division remains an integral part of the reform of the United Nations procurement system. In this regard, it may be recalled, that prior to 1996, the former Purchase and Transportation Service was divided into one transportation and two procurement sections, the latter being based on where the goods and services were to be delivered or performed: a Headquarters and Regional Offices Procurement Section and a Field Missions Procurement Section. However, effective 1 January 1996, the Purchase and Transportation Service was restructured and renamed the Procurement and Transportation Division. That Division was organized into three sections: the Transportation Section, the Commodity Procurement Section and the Support Services Section, with the intention that the existing D-1 post would be upgraded to a D-2 post for the Director. The new organizational structure for procurement was commodity-based, with the Commodity Procurement Section being organized into various clusters, each being responsible for an identifiable range of commodities. Thus, the emphasis was changed to the commodity or service being procured rather than on the location of the office or field mission for which it was being purchased. Among other things, it was assumed that this approach would maximize economies of scale and develop institutional expertise with respect to specific goods and services. The detailed functions of the Commodity Procurement Section and each of its clusters were set forth in paragraphs 11 to 19 of document A/C.5/50/13/Rev.1, dated 9 February 1996. Subsequently, on 1 July 1997, the Transportation Section was spun off and established as a separate Travel and Transportation Service, reporting directly to the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services. The Procurement and Transportation Division was then renamed the Procurement Division, which reflects more appropriately the responsibilities of the Division. As noted in paragraphs 3 to 7 and annex I to document A/52/534 and Corr.1, the Procurement Division was then restructured into two Commodity Procurement Sections, each with four clusters, and one Support Services Section. This remains so even after the transfer of the procurement function of the Department of Development Support and Management Services, now part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to the Procurement Division, effective February 1998. A current organizational chart for the Procurement Division is attached as an annex to the present report. It is the intention of the Secretary-General to continue to review the organizational structure of the Procurement Division in the coming months, especially in the context of common services. The Secretary-General will keep the General Assembly apprised of this review.

25. The Secretary-General wishes to reiterate that the establishment of the post of Director of the Procurement Division is essential to providing the appropriate level of executive direction and management. To focus critical attention on the dollar value of the procurement effected by the Procurement Division or the inclusion or exclusion of transportation services as part of its mandate, as has been done repeatedly in the past, is to miss the larger, more important picture. The head of the Procurement Division performs the function of a programme manager responsible for the day-to-day conduct of United Nations procurement activities under the general supervision of the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services. The head of the Procurement Division also renders advice to, and at times performs procurement services for, other United Nations offices, commissions, tribunals, agencies and subsidiary organs. Within the United Nations system, the head of the Procurement Division is specifically responsible for promoting coherent and consistent procurement policies, practices and procedures designed to provide an appropriate balance between the Organization's interest as a whole and the needs of the requisitioning departments and offices in particular. Furthermore, the head of the Procurement Division should be able to exercise a leadership role in common services and other inter-agency endeavours in procurement. In order to discharge all of these significant responsibilities as well as the concomitant responsibility of interfacing effectively with other programme managers and senior programme managers throughout the Organization and with representatives of permanent and observer missions, the head of the Procurement Division simply must have the appropriate stature. It should be noted that the heads of procurement services of such organizations as the United Nations Children's Fund and the Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office of UNDP are already at the D-2 level. Accordingly, the General Assembly is once again requested to take immediate action on this recommendation, which has been postponed repeatedly, to the serious detriment of the

Division specifically and United Nations procurement activities system-wide generally.

> **"23. *Underlines* the need to maintain inventory records in accordance with the relevant regulations and rules"**

26. The Secretary-General agrees with this recommendation and has reminded the appropriate departments and offices within the Secretariat of the need to maintain inventory records in accordance with the relevant regulations and rules.

> **"24. *Requests* the Secretary-General to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services with conducting a comprehensive review and analysis of the procurement-related arbitration cases and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session on measures to be taken"**

27. The Secretary-General acknowledges that, as recommended by the General Assembly, he has asked the Office of Internal Oversight Services to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of the procurement-related arbitration cases and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session on the measures to be taken. This review is still in progress.

> **"25. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to define and publish the procedures governing the role of the ombudsman and to examine the feasibility of assigning that position to a division other than one under the direct authority of the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services"**

28. The Secretary-General wishes to recall that in the December 1994 report of the High-level Group of Experts on Procurement, the creation of an ombudsman in the Department of Administration and Management was recommended. According to the Group of Experts, the role of the ombudsman is to hear complaints of disappointed bidders and others who feel they have been unfairly treated by the procurement system, which would provide a systematic means for dealing with the meritorious grievances of suppliers. Upon receiving such a complaint, the ombudsman will review the underlying facts and circumstances and furnish the bidder with the findings as to the propriety of the procurement process and the decision taken. Where appropriate, the ombudsman will also meet with the bidder and/or the Chief of the Procurement Division to hear, first-hand, their respective viewpoints. In the event that the ombudsman agrees with the bidder, a recommendation will be made to the Chief of the Procurement Division as to the appropriate corrective action to be taken. Where the Chief of the Procurement Division does not agree with the recommendation of the ombudsman, however, the matter will be referred to the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services for a final decision. The Secretary-General also wishes to recall that, in paragraph 58 of document A/C.5/51/9, he advised the General Assembly that, owing to the current overall budgetary constraints and consistent with the recommendation of the Group of Experts, the functions of the ombudsman should continue to be performed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services and, as necessary by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Management as well. The Secretary-General continues to believe that this arrangement is appropriate and adequate. However, the proposal concerning the creation of a separate, independent ombudsman will be kept under review.

> **"26. *Regrets* the continued delay in the publication of the procurement manual, and notes with concern the apparent absence of effective communication between the various key Secretariat departments involved in its preparation"**

29. As indicated in paragraph 4 above, the Secretary-General is pleased to confirm that the revised Procurement Manual (version 01) dated 31 March 1998 has already been issued.

> **"27. *Requests* the Secretary-General to examine alternative methods of collecting statistical data in order to provide a more transparent view of the true national provenance of companies benefiting from procurement contracts"**

30. The Secretary-General, as recommended by the General Assembly, has developed a single format for the provision of data for procurement undertaken at Headquarters as well as in the field. Commencing with calendar year 1998, such data shall be reported to the General Assembly annually.

"28. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit proposals on possible amendments to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations in order to address issues of potential conflict of interest, such as the employment of former United Nations procurement officers by United Nations suppliers and vice versa"

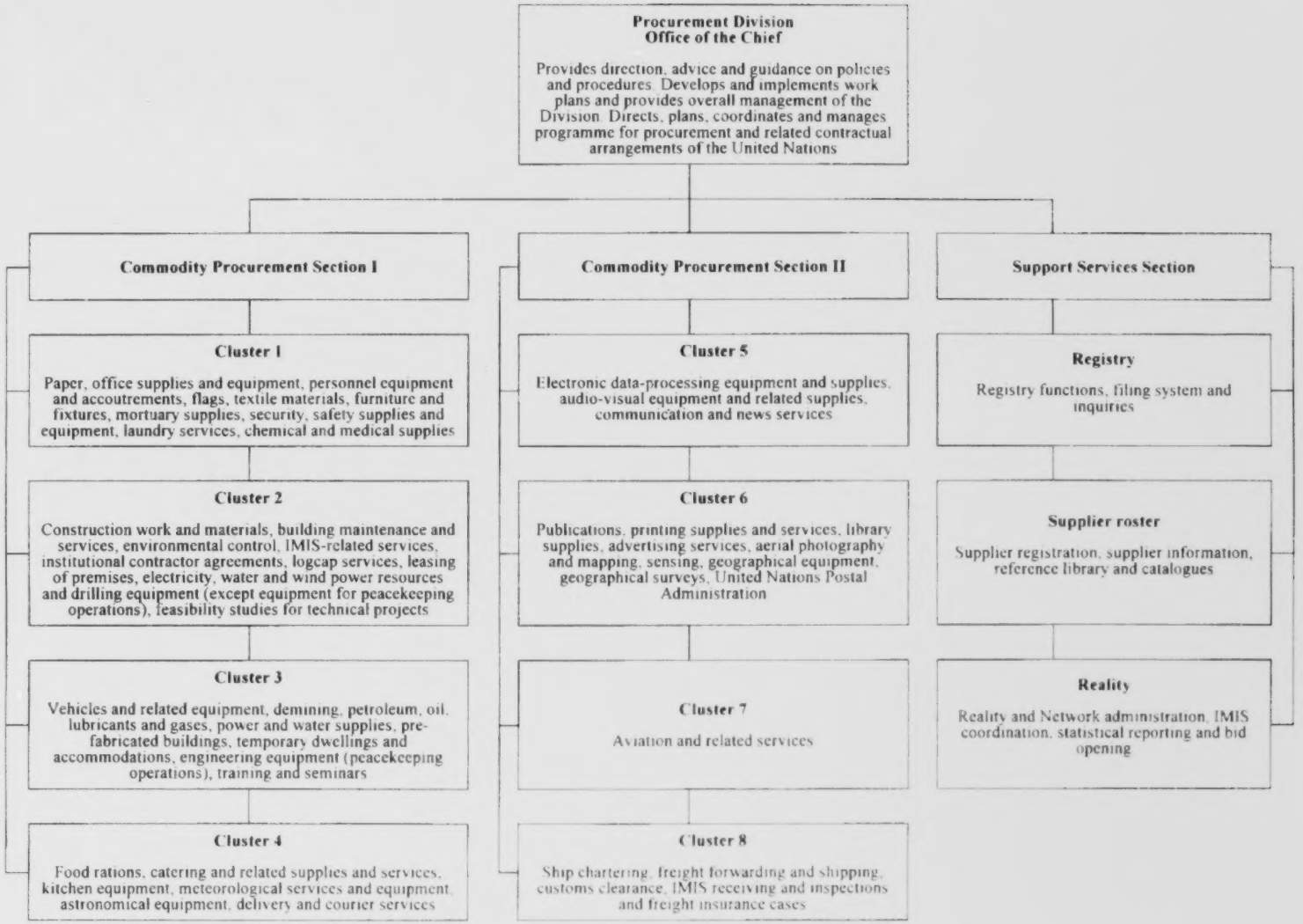
31. The Secretary-General wishes to recall that he has submitted a proposed Code of Conduct to the General Assembly in document A/52/488 of 17 October 1997, which addresses such issues as potential and actual conflicts of interest. Moreover, as stated in paragraph 10 of that report, once the Code is adopted, various subsidiary issues will be considered, such as the matter of the employment of former United Nations staff members by United Nations vendors and vice versa. Finally, the Secretary-General would like to note that proposed regulation 1.2 (j) requires staff members to keep information confidential even subsequent to separation from service.

III. Conclusion

32. As will be noted from the above, the recommendations, decisions, suggestions and concerns expressed by the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the oversight bodies, as well as the High-level Group of Experts on Procurement, have all been addressed and implemented, except to the very limited extent indicated in the present report. In this regard, the Secretary-General wishes to observe that all of the items enumerated in annex II of document A/52/534 and Corr.1, entitled "Target dates for work plan of the Procurement Division", have also been fully implemented. The Secretary-General wishes to reiterate his view that the staff in the Procurement Division are generally well-trained and hard-working professionals who are motivated to carry out the tasks entrusted to them, despite the heavy demands and pressures of time. The Secretary-General also wishes to reiterate his belief that the establishment of the post of Director remains critically important. Finally, the Secretary-General wishes to express his appreciation to the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Board of Auditors and the Office of Internal Oversight Services for their valuable advice and guidance in helping to achieve and effect procurement reform.

Annex

Organization chart of the Procurement Division


Procurement Division
Office of the Chief
Provides direction, advice and guidance on policies and procedures. Develops and implements work plans and provides overall management of the Division. Directs, plans, coordinates and manages programme for procurement and related contractual arrangements of the United Nations
Commodity Procurement Section I
Commodity Procurement Section II
Support Services Section
Cluster 1
Paper, office supplies and equipment, personnel equipment and accoutrements, flags, textile materials, furniture and fixtures, mortuary supplies, security, safety supplies and equipment, laundry services, chemical and medical supplies
Cluster 2
Construction work and materials, building maintenance and services, environmental control, IMIS-related services, institutional contractor agreements, logcap services, leasing of premises, electricity, water and wind power resources and drilling equipment (except equipment for peacekeeping operations), feasibility studies for technical projects
Cluster 3
Vehicles and related equipment, demining, petroleum, oil, lubricants and gases, power and water supplies, pre-fabricated buildings, temporary dwellings and accommodations, engineering equipment (peacekeeping operations), training and seminars
Cluster 4
Food rations, catering and related supplies and services, kitchen equipment, meteorological services and equipment, astronomical equipment, delivery and courier services
Cluster 5
Electronic data-processing equipment and supplies, audio-visual equipment and related supplies, communication and news services
Cluster 6
Publications, printing supplies and services, library supplies, advertising services, aerial photography and mapping, sensing, geographical equipment, geographical surveys, United Nations Postal Administration
Cluster 7
Aviation and related services
Cluster 8
Ship chartering, freight forwarding and shipping, customs clearance, IMIS receiving and inspections and freight insurance cases
Registry
Registry functions, filing system and inquiries
Supplier roster
Supplier registration, supplier information, reference library and catalogues
Reality
Reality and Network administration, IMIS coordination, statistical reporting and bid opening

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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 51/4 of 24 October 1996 and outlines the measures taken to implement that resolution.

II. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/4

A. Joint activities

2. The joint United Nations OAS International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) remains the main vehicle of cooperation between the two organizations. The coordination of MICIVIH operations continued to be carried out by the Joint Working Group on MICIVIH, comprised of representatives from the Secretariat of the United Nations (Departments of Political Affairs, Peacekeeping Operations and Administration and Management, and the Office of Legal Affairs) and representatives of the General Secretariat of OAS.

3. The Executive Director of MICIVIH reports directly to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the Secretary-General of OAS. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti is responsible for coordinating the work of the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), which replaced the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH) and the earlier United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH) and MICIVIH. MICIVIH's knowledge of local issues, field experience and linguistic skills have been of considerable utility to MIPONUH and its predecessors. Mechanisms have been put in place at all levels of the mission to facilitate coordination and the exchange of information. MICIVIH works closely, in particular, with the civilian police component of MIPONUH on matters pertaining to the detention and treatment of prisoners, as well as other human rights issues, including human rights training of the Haitian National Police. MIPONUH provides administrative and logistic support to MICIVIH, while the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs support both missions from New York.

B. Consultations and exchange of information

4. During the reporting period, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of OAS met on several occasions. The Secretary-General of the United Nations assumed office in January 1997 and visited OAS headquarters shortly thereafter. He was invited to address the Permanent Council of OAS on 18 June 1997. In his statement, he emphasized the important role played by both organizations in Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala in the tasks of institution-building, strengthening of democracy and human rights and building a society ruled by law.

5. On 29 and 30 April 1998, in Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations attended the special meeting commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of OAS and the adoption of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.

6. On 28 and 29 July 1998, the Secretary-General of OAS attended the third meeting between the United Nations and regional organizations, which was convened at Headquarters by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to discuss practical and more effective ways of establishing "Cooperation for Conflict Prevention". In his opening address, the Secretary-General stated that "the need for increased cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations had never been greater and that ... [they] have an obligation to enhance [their] cooperation for the prevention of deadly conflicts".

7. The Department of Political Affairs is the focal point for cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. In this capacity, the Department coordinates the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/4, including the preparation of the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly.

8. The Department was also responsible for the substantive organization of the third meeting between the United Nations and regional organizations. The meeting examined the potential for greater interaction and cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the field of conflict prevention within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations and the mandates of regional organizations. While recognizing that no single model of cooperation will cover all eventualities, various possible modalities for co-operation were considered on the basis of the existing strengths and capabilities of the organizations.

9. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/5 of 21 October 1994, the Department contacted the heads of all components of the United Nations system requesting them to identify, in their respective offices, officers responsible for OAS affairs to be OAS focal points in various areas of work. Subsequently, the Department established and continues to maintain a list of United Nations focal points, which was communicated to OAS in order to facilitate more pragmatic and cost-effective cooperation between the two systems.

10. The United Nations was represented at a conference on "Governance, Democracy and Civil Society in the Caribbean Community", co-sponsored by OAS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Secretariat of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Inter-American-Development Bank (IDB), and the University of the West Indies, held at Christ Church, Barbados, on 9 and 10 September 1997. The Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations was also invited to observe the second OAS-CARICOM general meeting, which took place at OAS headquarters, Washington, D.C., on 23 and 24 April 1998.

C. Information received from the United Nations system

11. In response to a request by the Department of Political Affairs, the heads of agencies, programmes, departments and offices of the United Nations system supplied the information summarized below.

1. Secretariat of the United Nations

Office of Internal Oversight Services

12. At the request of the Inspector General of OAS, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (through its resident auditor in Haiti) carried out an audit in 1996 and provided a report on the expenditures incurred by the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH), a mission jointly financed by the United Nations and OAS. The audit indicated that the mission exercised effective internal controls over its expenditures.

Department of Public Information

13. During the period under review, a wide range of issues and events concerning cooperation between the United Nations and OAS were covered extensively by the Department's multimedia services, particularly through press releases, radio magazines, daily news bulletins and feature programmes. The topics included: support of the United Nations for broadening the "excellent working relationship" with OAS, expressed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his statement to the Permanent Council of OAS in June 1997; the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the joint United Nations/OAS Human Rights Mission in Haiti; and a situation report by Mr. C. Granderson of the OAS Electoral Mission in Haiti.

14. The radio programmes covering these and other topics of interest for OAS Member States, such as the preference of Latin Americans for democracy, were produced in the official and non-official languages for regional and worldwide distribution. The office of OAS in Washington, D.C., one of the regular recipients of DPI radio productions, continued to broadcast all programmes produced in Spanish by United Nations Radio in New York.

15. Through the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the Department has intensified its effort to collect all the documents and publications issued by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the main United Nations office in the OAS region, as well as materials produced by United Nations information centres and the field offices of UNDP located in Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas. All United Nations materials collected have been indexed in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library documentation database (UNBIS/Horizon).

16. As part of the Department's efforts to enhance the availability of, and access to, electronic sources of information, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been involved in the continuous development of the United Nations web site in the Spanish language, which provides the Spanish speaking population in the OAS region with the opportunity to get up-to-date information on the activities of the United Nations.

17. A Dag Hammarskjöld Library workshop for United Nations depository librarians in the region on the use of United Nations documents is being planned for mid-1999 in Santiago.

18. In its coverage of recent peacekeeping operations, the Department's latest edition of *Basic Facts about the United Nations* draws attention to the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, giving special emphasis to cooperation with OAS in respect to Haiti. Both the *Yearbook of the United Nations* and the *UN Chronicle* covered developments regarding cooperation between the United Nations and OAS, either by including the full texts of General Assembly resolutions on the subject, or in the context of reporting about General Assembly proceedings and deliberations of other legislative bodies.

2. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

19. The cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and OAS started in the early 1970s when UNHCR expanded its presence and programmes in the Americas in response to the refugee exodus that took place during that decade in the Southern Cone. However, it reached a peak on the occasion of the launching in Central America of the Esquipulas II agreements, which included the search for durable solutions for the hundreds of thousands of Central American refugees and the displaced as an integral part of the pacification and democratization process in that region.

20. Though joint efforts have been undertaken, mostly at the operational level, in the context of implementation of the respective programmes of both organizations in the field, the outcome of such collaborative efforts are also to be found in a number of important events which constitute landmarks in the managing of refugee situation in the Americas. In this regard, the 1984 Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Panama and Mexico, at which the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees was adopted, the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) and the San José Declaration on Refugees and Displaced Persons of 1994 are only a few of the instances upon which both organizations have successfully developed their cooperation.

21. Since 1985, the plight of refugees and other uprooted populations has found a place in the agenda of the OAS General Assembly. Every year since 1985, the countries represented at the OAS General Assembly have called upon member States and the OAS's principal organs to pay special attention to the protection and assistance needs of these categories of particularly destitute people. This year was no exception. The OAS General Assembly, at its twenty-eighth regular session, approved a resolution on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Americas, in which the General Assembly, *inter alia*, expressed satisfaction with the cooperation between OAS and UNHCR, and requested the office of the Secretary-General of OAS to "intensify this cooperation in support of efforts made by member States to find solutions for these populations, with particular emphasis on the specific needs of refugee, displaced and returnee women, elderly persons and children".

22. As a follow-up to a meeting between the Secretary-General of OAS and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, held in Washington, D.C., on 30 April 1997, during the 1997 regular session of the OAS General Assembly, a UNHCR delegation met with the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Matters of OAS to further discuss an agenda on issues of mutual interest. As a result, a number of themes were identified for cooperation between the two organizations which have occupied our joint work plan during the reporting period.

23. In North America, a meeting between UNHCR and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was held in Ottawa, on 20 October 1997, at which the Commission's expert advice was sought on issues pertaining to its competence within the inter-American human rights system in relation to international refugee protection. More recently, the UNHCR office in Mexico invited the OAS representation to that country to join efforts in a human rights dissemination programme being launched in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998. A joint dissemination plan has been prepared with the objective of further promoting both the Universal Declaration as well as the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, which also celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 1998.

24. Under the auspices of OAS, and with the participation of representatives of OAS member States, UNHCR and the International Organization of Migration (IOM), a conference, entitled "Regional responses to forced migration emergencies in Central America and the Caribbean", was held in Washington, D.C., in September 1997. The conference, co-organized by the Open Society Institute and the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, was made possible also thanks to the support provided by the Department of Legal Cooperation and Information and the secretariat for Legal Affairs of OAS.

25. In Nicaragua, until the closing of the office of UNHCR in March 1998, the organization collaborated closely with the International Support and Verification Commission of OAS (CIAV) in its efforts to support the disarmament and integration of members of armed groups in Nicaragua. The successful implementation of the OAS-CIAV programme permitted hundreds of families, who benefited from CIREFCA financed projects, to finally achieve their reintegration in the central and northern regions of Nicaragua in a new peaceful environment.

26. In Guatemala, during 1997, UNHCR contributed, together with OAS and other actors, in the inter-institutional effort to assist the ex-combatants of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) in their demobilization and reintegration. UNHCR focused its activities on a personal documentation programme and provided logistic support for URNG members returning from

outside the country, while OAS was involved chiefly with education and training programmes.

27. Also in Guatemala, UNHCR developed close ties with the OAS programme "PROPAZ", directed at strengthening local capacities in the fields of conflict analysis, management and resolution, as it covers the municipality of Ixcan in Quiche, also a returnee region and, hence, a geographical area in which the programmes of both organizations overlap. Within this framework, in May 1997, OAS-PROPAZ organized a highly appreciated workshop on "third parties in the context of local conflicts" addressed to UNHCR staff. In coordination with the Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement of Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA), OAS-PROPAZ and UNHCR, Guatemala collaborated in the elaboration of a "map of internal conflicts" in communities of the Ixcan Grande region. Furthermore, a series of workshops on conflict management addressed to local community groups in Ixcan are to be conducted this year, prior to UNHCR's withdrawal from the region by the end of 1998.

28. In South America, the OAS delegation in Venezuela has been invited to participate in the United Nations thematic group on human rights chaired by UNHCR. The purpose of the group is to provide the Government of Venezuela with a coordinated response on human rights issues.

29. In addition to the aforementioned instances of cooperation, UNHCR has, on numerous occasions, expressed its willingness to further strengthen links with OAS, an appeal which was recently reiterated during the last regular session of the OAS General Assembly, held in Caracas from 1 to 3 June 1998. In this regard, the UNHCR bureau for the Americas will continue exploring avenues of collaboration with OAS and its principal organs in areas of mutual interest, *inter alia*, through the joint promotion and dissemination of refugee law and the undertaking of research programmes to further develop regional protection mechanisms for refugees and other uprooted populations within the legal and institutional framework offered by the inter-American human rights system.

3. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

30. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/4, on cooperation between the United Nations and OAS, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has maintained and strengthened its working relations and contacts with OAS.

31. In addition to the growing participation of OAS officials in fora organized by ECLAC, and vice-versa, and general exchanges of information during the period under consideration, joint activities were carried out in the areas of social policies, statistics and regional integration.

32. In the area of social policies, on 1 March 1998, both organizations renewed, for another two years, the joint programme on social policies for Latin America (PROPOSAL), created in 1989 to support the design and implementation of social policies through applied research, training and technical assistance. During the period under consideration, the following activities were carried out through the PROPOSAL programme:

(a) Applied research: The research developed by PROPOSAL has generated important methodological contributions to the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of social programmes and projects. The development of the Cost Impact Analysis (CIA) has allowed for a more rational allocation of resources, reducing the cost per impact unit in basic health and primary education. Several studies aimed at identifying the determining factors of academic success in basic education have been compiled in a book, entitled "Educación, Eficiencia y Equidad", jointly published in June 1998 by ECLAC and OAS. During 1997 and 1998, PROPOSAL has been carrying out a research programme funded by Germany and the five participating countries, i.e., Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Paraguay. The goal of the programme is to identify, systematize and propose strategies and policy tools for increasing the efficiency and impact of social programmes. The research has focussed on the "Proyecto Joven", the main component of the Support to Productive Reconversion Programme of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Argentina; the AIDS programme of the Secretary for Special Projects of the Ministry of Health of Brazil; the Support to Micro-Enterprises Programme of the Fund for Social Investment and Solidarity of Chile; the Community Schools Restaurants of the Secretary for Social Welfare of the Municipality of Medellín, Colombia; and the Social Investment Programme of the Secretary for Social Action of the Presidency of Paraguay.

(b) Training: Courses on formulation, monitoring and evaluation of social programmes and projects for civil servants in charge of formulating social policies, programmes and projects were organized in Buenos Aires in June 1997, in collaboration with the Secretary of Social Development and the Latin American Faculty on Social Sciences, and in Brasilia from 14 to 25 April 1997, in collaboration with the Instituto de Pesquisa Economica Aplicada and the Centro de Trenamiento para o

Desenvolvimiento Economico e Social. In addition to those courses, two seminars on *ex post facto* evaluation of social projects were organized in Santiago from 24 to 26 September and from 29 to 31 October 1997, in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation.

(c) Technical Assistance: Activities were concluded in 1997 on the evaluation of the nutritional and educative impact of the school lunches programme in Uruguay; the evaluation of the food subprogramme of the solidarity support for the elderly programme in Argentina; and the impact evaluation of the support to micro-enterprises programme of the Fund for Social Investment and Solidarity carried out by the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation of Chile. In addition, it is expected that new technical assistance activities, consisting of the development of a monitoring system for the labour reconversion programme of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Argentina, will begin in 1998. In addition to this, possible technical assistance activities are under study with the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation of Chile.

33. Within the framework of the Agreement on Technical Cooperation in Statistical Matters between OAS and ECLAC, signed on 7 October 1993, the second Joint Meeting of High-Level Statistical Experts took place at ECLAC headquarters from 15 to 18 October 1996. During the meeting, both organizations presented their programmes of work on statistical matters for the years 1997 and 1998, and delegates from 27 countries reviewed international and regional cooperation programmes and debated issues such as the effects of globalization on statistical systems, innovation and competitiveness, as well as the dissemination of statistical information and training. In addition, the seventeenth meeting of the Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Statistical Conference, held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, on 10 and 11 April 1997, presented a follow-up to the agreements reached at the second Joint Meeting between OAS and ECLAC on statistical matters. ECLAC prepared for the chair of the nineteenth meeting of the Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Statistical Conference, which took place in Washington, D.C., on 19 and 20 November 1997, a report of the activities from the programme of work presented at the second Joint Meeting between OAS and ECLAC on statistical matters carried out between 1 November 1996 and 31 October 1997. Lastly, ECLAC is currently organizing the third Joint Meeting of High-Level Statistical Experts, scheduled to take place in late October 1998.

34. Together with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and within the framework of the Tripartite Committee OAS-IDB-ECLAC, ECLAC and OAS have continued assisting Governments in the implementation of the new hemispheric agenda resulting from the Summit of the Americas, held in Miami, Florida, from 9 to 11 December 1994, in particular with regard to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). So far, ECLAC has been particularly active in the working groups dealing with competition, services and access to markets by smaller economies. During 1997 and 1998, it participated in and hosted the third, fourth, fifth and sixth meetings of the Working Group on Services, in March, July and October 1997, and January 1998. It also participated in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth meetings of the Working Group on Competition in January, July and September 1997 and January 1998; and in the sixth, seventh, and eight meetings of the Working Group on Smaller Economies in February, August, and October 1997. ECLAC also participated in the Ministerial Meeting in San José, Costa Rica, in March 1998, which decided to establish the Committee on Trade Negotiations (CTN), and in the first meeting of CTN, in Buenos Aires, in June 1998. This meeting began a new phase centred on the negotiation process of establishing the Free Trade Area. The rules and procedures adopted by CTN include the participation of the Tripartite Committee, supporting the administrative secretariat and providing technical assistance to the different entities of FTAA (CTN, negotiating groups, committees and consultative groups). On this basis, ECLAC is presently assessing the areas in which it could continue to assist – as part of the Tripartite Committee, together with OAS and IDB – the FTAA process according to its competitive edge and resources available. The Plan of Action of the second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago in April 1998, also requested ECLAC and OAS to strengthen regional cooperation in the area of education. Both organizations are already active in the Working Group on follow-up to the commitments on education of the Summit.

4. World Food Programme

35. No official formal cooperation agreement exists between WFP and OAS, but, at the country level, there is informal interchange, including seminars and workshops. Representatives of OAS attend WFP food and coordination meetings, which are chaired by WFP (with CARICOM), and contacts are made through the representatives of member States.

5. United Nations International Drug Control Programme

36. During the biennium 1997–1998, the United Nations and OAS continued their close collaboration in the field of international drug control. Specifically, this work was

carried out by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD).

37. UNDCP and CICAD meet twice yearly to consult on regional drug control strategies, and trends and programming priorities, and to set forth the highest practicable level of coordination in project planning, information-gathering and analysis.

38. Both organizations were associated in regional and subregional programmes, projects and workshops aimed at the harmonization of national drug control legislation, strengthening of essential chemicals and precursors control departments, drug abuse prevention and money laundering. Overall priority is assigned to the capacity-building of national drug control commissions, through technical support at the technical, legal and managerial levels.

39. By way of example, UNDCP and CICAD collaborated in the organization of Caribbean technical task group meetings on subjects such as regional law enforcement and maritime cooperation, held in October 1997, and collaborated in the second Regional Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action on Drug Control, Cooperation and Coordination in the Caribbean, held in December 1997. Both CICAD and UNDCP are in the process of implementing selected recommendations of that Plan of Action on the basis of respective comparative advantages. Further, UNDCP and CICAD are jointly supporting subregional programmes in both the Caribbean and South America aimed at establishing uniform information-gathering and processing systems for the measurement of drug abuse prevalence and incidence. Uniform drug abuse measurement tools are essential for cross-country comparability and the assessment of trends at national and regional levels.

40. UNDCP is currently supporting, at the technical level, the elaboration of a regional multilateral drug control evaluation system, a task entrusted to CICAD by the Summit of the Americas at its April 1998 meeting in Santiago. UNDCP's contribution is focused on the development of standards and criteria for the measurement of effectiveness of national and regional drug control policies and programmes.

41. CICAD and UNDCP routinely exchange information on their operational activities in the field. On the basis of a joint aide-mémoire of 3 August 1995, UNDCP and CICAD conduct joint appraisals of regional and subregional programme and project ideas before they reach the level of implementation, thus ensuring complementarity, optimal division of labour and the avoidance of duplication.

6. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

42. At the Summit Conference on Sustainable Development, held at Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in December 1996, OAS was entrusted with coordinating follow-up to the Plan of Action of the Summit Conference. The Plan of Action represents a new commitment on the part of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas to carry out specific initiatives through a collective effort by countries and international agencies to promote sustainable development in the region. In October 1997, UNESCO decided to participate in the Plan of Action by providing cooperation in the amount of $250,000.

43. Within the framework of this joint UNESCO/OAS cooperation, the following projects were agreed as part of the follow-up to the Summit Conference:

(a) A document entitled "Education for a viable future in the Americas" is being prepared, which reflects international thinking on the subject, following the meeting on that theme organized by UNESCO in Thessaloniki, Greece, in December 1997. This document will be considered at a seminar/workshop to be held in Bogotá in 1998.

(b) Both organizations will cooperate in the development of an international network of institutions to train specialized teachers; this will lead to the production of the guides and guidelines needed for the establishment of new training programmes at the national and local levels.

(c) The development of an international register is intended to promote knowledge of and information on innovative practices in the field of sustainable development through the Internet.

(d) A project on "Education for democracy and democratic management" is intended to disseminate democratic practices in the Americas through educational systems at the national and local levels in order to promote sustainability in communities and local schools. The project output will be the publication on innovative experiences in educational management.

44. In the field of science, OAS accepted UNESCO's invitation to participate, either as a co-sponsor or as a partner, in the World Conference on Science, to be held in June 1999.

45. In the area of communication, information and informatics, a workshop in networking technology for Latin America and the Caribbean was scheduled for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13 to 18 July 1998. UNESCO and OAS are co-promoters of the workshop.

46. From 1986 to 1992, OAS was represented on the Executive Committee of the Regional Programme to Strengthen Cooperation among National Information Networks and Systems for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (INFOLAC). OAS is regularly invited to attend meetings organized by the UNESCO regional offices and these efforts will be continued, allowing OAS staff members to benefit from information and informatics activities in the region.

47. The UNESCO office in El Salvador provided the OAS Inter-American Commission of Women with technical and financial support for a seminar/workshop on the theme "Salvadoran Women and the Culture of Peace", which was held in San Salvador from 22 to 24 January 1996. The objective of the seminar was to integrate Salvadoran women in the establishment of a genuine culture of peace and to promote a clearly defined leading role for women in the consolidation of peace and democracy.

48. An international seminar on "Women in Central America, Panama, Mexico and the Dominican Republic for a Culture of Peace", held in Guatemala City from 21 to 23 August 1997, adopted the outline of a project to be developed by UNESCO and the Inter-American Commission of Women. The objective of the project was promotion of the region's women leaders in their incorporation of and in the development of a culture of peace.

49. Since June 1997, UNESCO and the OAS Office of Cultural Affairs have been strengthening institutional ties in the areas of culture through regular meetings and communications with a view to identifying common areas of interest for developing projects and activities and avoiding any duplication of work. OAS participated in the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, sponsored by UNESCO in late March 1998 in Stockholm. OAS will also participate in the next meeting on culture and development to be organized by UNESCO and IDB in Paris in 1999.

50. During the period under review, it should be noted that OAS has published the papers presented by participants at the UNESCO workshop held at Cuenca, Ecuador, in 1995 on the theme "Illicit trafficking of cultural property in Latin America". UNESCO also financed the publishing of a book entitled "One hundred missing objects: looting in Latin America".

7. International Labour Organization

51. In October 1995, the tenth Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour was held in Buenos Aires as one of the activities of the inter-American labour system of OAS. At that Conference, the Ministers of Labour adopted a declaration, which included a request that the International Labour Organization (ILO), among other international organizations, should provide such analytical support, technical assistance and relevant reports, within its area of competence, as might be requested by the four Working Groups established by the Conference to study the following issues: modernization of ministries of labour, social dialogue and collective bargaining, the labour force of the future and the impact of economic integration on employment.

52. During the Conference, at which ILO participated as an observer, the Regional Office presented two technical papers: one on the employment situation in the region, "The employment challenge in Latin America and the Caribbean", and the other on labour standards and integration, "The labour dimensions of economic integration in Latin America and the Caribbean".

53. Since then, ILO has participated in all the meetings of the four Working Groups and has responded to the requests of the member countries belonging to each Group. Likewise, it has supported and participated in the meetings and seminars convened by the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labour Matters (CEATAL) and the Trade Union Technical Advisory Council (COSATE).

54. The members of Working Group 1 on "Economic integration and its effects on employment and labour migrations", meeting in Washington, D.C., in November 1995, adopted the terms of reference for a comparative study of employment policies in the context of hemispheric integration. Under subsequent arrangements between OAS, IDB and ILO, it was agreed that the study would be conducted by ILO and funded jointly by IDB and ILO. Owing to financial constraints, it was agreed that the study would focus exclusively on the analysis of direct employment policies in seven countries. Each of the country reports was to be submitted by the end of 1996 and the comparative study by the end of the first quarter of 1997. ILO has discharged this obligation, having already submitted to IDB, OAS and the respective Ministries of Labour the reports on programmes to improve employment and income in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Mexico and Peru. In March 1998, the studies were published jointly by ILO and IDB, along with a comparative analysis of employment and income policies and programmes in the seven countries.

55. In relation to the issue dealt with by Working Group 1, ILO conducted two more studies during 1996–1997: one, on the effects of trade liberalization on employment and wages in Brazil, Chile and Peru, and the other on labour costs and

competitiveness in the manufacturing sector in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. In addition, a study is being completed on the effects of trade liberalization and labour reform on labour productivity. Although these activities were not among those which ILO had projected to carry out for Working Group 1, these studies may be useful for the countries belonging to that Group and, in general, for all the countries of the region, since the selection of the countries in which the studies were conducted has made it possible to draw some conclusions in relation to the effect of liberalization on employment and to differences in the structure of labour costs, recent trends in such costs and their relationship to competitiveness.

56. As a participant in Working Group 2 on "Social dialogue and collective bargaining" which met in Bogotá in October 1996, ILO presented a paper on updating and conceptualizing social dialogue and cooperation in processes of economic liberalization, modernization and globalization. This paper and the document prepared by the Ministry of Labour of Colombia and the OAS General Secretariat were the basic documents for the meeting.

57. Prior to this meeting, COSATE organized a workshop, in Buenos Aires in May 1996, on "Social dialogue and collective bargaining in the Americas". ILO also participated in this workshop and presented a paper on the subject.

58. In April 1996, in Washington, D.C., ILO also participated in Working Group 3 on "Modernization of the Ministries of Labour and information on labour markets" and was requested to prepare a study on the modernization processes being carried out in Ministries of Labour in the region, including policy recommendations and guidelines for action. ILO worked on both a diagnostic study of the development of the Ministries of Labour and an analysis of the new roles of future Ministries in the context of the current reform of labour administration and completed a diagnostic study of all the Ministries of the region, which described their development up to 1992. In response to the Group's request, at the beginning of July 1997, ILO undertook to update the study on the basis of each Ministry's reply to its survey. As of April 1998, replies had been received from Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

59. ILO began to analyse current trends in labour administration and their effects on the roles and functions of future Ministries before the tenth Conference of Ministers was held in Buenos Aires in 1995. In this connection, ILO sought the collaboration of experts both within and outside the region and prepared a document reflecting the main aspects of the issue. This document was submitted for consideration to the ILO members in the region during a tripartite meeting held in May 1997. The policy guidelines established at that tripartite meeting are being considered by countries in the process of modernizing their labour administration systems and the relevant Ministries.

60. ILO participated in the seminar held by CEATAL in Buenos Aires in April 1996 on "Modernization of the Ministries of Labour and information on labour markets" and made a presentation on the subject matter.

61. The ILO Inter-American Centre for Research and Documentation on Vocational Training (CINTERFOR) prepared one of the basic documents and participated in the organization and conduct of the meeting Working Group 4 on "The labour force of the future: Productive restructuring and vocational training" which met in San José, Costa Rica, in August 1996.

62. In addition, OAS Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and the statistical institutes of the countries of the region are beginning to implement the inter-American labour market information system (SISMEL) project. ILO will take part in the project's design and implementation as a participant in the working group established for this purpose.

63. Lastly, the ILO area office for Central America is supporting various activities of the OAS Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture, a regional agency affiliated with OAS.

8. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

64. The collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and OAS has covered a wide spectrum of activities ranging from reciprocal representation at meetings, exchanges of information and experiences, exchanges of documents and publications and the implementation of joint actions.

9. The World Bank

65. The President of the World Bank, Mr. Wolfensohn, has emphasized the importance he places on partnerships with other institutions in enabling the World Bank to use its resources most effectively in assisting our member countries. Given the significance the World Bank accords to its partnership and cooperation with OAS, the President of the Bank meets regularly with the heads of OAS and IDB to discuss matters of common interest and to coordinate activities.

66. Since the first Summit of the Americas, held in Miami in 1994, relations between the World Bank and OAS have intensified. OAS was given a lead role in the organization of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), in which the World Bank participates as an observer. In October 1997, the Bank hosted the tenth meeting of SIRG, demonstrating its commitment to the summit process and to cooperation with OAS.

67. Bank relations with OAS will continue to strengthen and intensify as a result of the second Summit of the Americas, held in April 1998 in Santiago. The Regional Office has assisted in the preparation for the Summit, notably by intensive participation in a working group on education. As a follow-up to the Summit, the Bank was to host a conference on education in the Americas in June 1998. The conference will bring together ministers of education and finance, along with key business leaders, and will highlight the importance of better educational outcomes in the achievement of regional development and poverty reduction goals.

68. An additional focus of cooperation has been the area of sustainable development, in which the two institutions have worked together on both preparation of and follow-up to the Summit Conference on Sustainable Development, held in 1996.

10. United Nations Environment Programme

69. The Summit Conference on Sustainable Development identified the key challenges for the development of the Latin American region in the next five decades and its main urban problems. It also requested the participation and cooperation of development agencies. Subsequently, an Inter-agency Task Force was created under the coordination of OAS to assist in achieving the objectives decided on at the meeting and, to this end, established five Working Groups, respectively on sustainable cities and communities, innovative financing for sustainable development, a hemispheric network of legal experts on the environment, coordination of technical cooperation on water supply and on cleaner production. UNEP heads the Working Group on cleaner production and chaired the "First Meeting of the Cleaner Production Working Group of the Inter-agency Task Force to Support the Bolivia Summit Follow-up", in Washington, D.C., on 20 April 1998. The objectives of the meeting were to identify the current cleaner production activities undertaken in the region by various agencies and to define specific tasks the Working Group will be focusing on to promote the implementation of cleaner production. The Working Group decided to develop a regional programme on cleaner production in hospitals, to establish an executive committee to identify priority areas to be addressed by the Working Group and to convene the "Cleaner Production Conference of the Americas", which was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in August, 1998.

70. The eleventh Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean was held in March 1998, in Lima. Subsequently, the Forum of Ministers established an Inter-agency Technical Committee where "UNEP will encourage the participation of both the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system and bodies of the inter-American system" in order to facilitate the technical coordination of programmes that these organizations undertake in Latin America and the Caribbean.

71. The 1997 Source Book of Alternative Technologies for Freshwater Augmentation was prepared by the Unit of Sustainable Development and Environment of the General Secretariat of OAS, as part of a joint UNEP Water Branch and International Environmental Technology Centre effort, with the purpose of providing water resource managers and planners with information on used technologies, especially in developing countries and economies in transition.

72. The Inter-American Dialogue on Water Management, held in Miami, Florida, in October 1992, called for the establishment of the Inter-American Water Resources Network (IWRN) – a hemispheric network to improve cooperation among organizations with activities in water resources management in the Americas. OAS was one of the sponsors of the Miami meeting and was also invited to house the technical secretariat of IWRN. UNEP is a member of the Network's Advisory Council and has provided financial support.

73. The management plan for the San Juan River commenced in 1996 and consists of a diagnostic study and environmental zoning and identification of projects. Technicians from OAS and UNEP undertook joint missions and prepared a technical document, which was sent to the Governments of Costa Rica and Nicaragua for assessment. OAS and UNEP also financially supported the first phase of this project. In 1998, the proposal for the second phase of the project, prepared by OAS and UNEP, was also submitted to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for approval.

74. At the request of the Governments of Argentina and Bolivia for technical assistance in the elaboration of a strategic action programme (SAP) for the bi-national basin of the Bermejo River, a grant was approved by GEF for the initial phase of the project. The main objective is to promote environmentally sustainable development within the

bi-national basin, taking into account investment plans elaborated by the "Bi-national Commission for the Development of the Upper Bermejo and Grande de Tarija River Basins", in order to reverse environmental degradation of land and water resources of the basin. The action programme is expected to be completed in 1999.

75. In the case of the San Francisco basin, UNEP, in collaboration with OAS, has been providing technical support for the elaboration of a project proposal for a watershed management plan at the request of the Government of Brazil. For the Paraguay River basin, the Governments of Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay also requested UNEP and OAS assistance in the development of the first phase of a sustainable watershed plan. The project proposals were to be completed and submitted to GEF by July 1998.

76. A medium-sized project, to be funded by GEF, for the implementation of a river basin information system to support water resources management (Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay) is currently under discussion.

77. The objective of the regional mesoamerican system of protected areas, buffer zones and biological corridors' programme is to facilitate connections among the regional system of protected areas, as well as a migratory route for species that move through southern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. Additionally, the strategic programme intends to create an equilibrium between biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the region. It was developed by the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD). UNDP and UNEP were approved as the implementing agencies for the execution of the programme and OAS was involved in the elaboration of its first proposal.

78. At the Summit Conference on Sustainable Development, Heads of State adopted a declaration expressing their support for the integration of civil society into the design and implementation of sustainable development policies in Latin America and the Caribbean at regional and national levels. OAS prepared and submitted the initial project proposal to GEF for funding through UNEP. A 15-month project, ending in 1999, was afterwards approved by GEF and by OAS, the United States Agency for International Development and UNESCO. Non-governmental organizations have been integrated into the project through various mechanisms, which include national focal points in OAS member States. The Inter-American Strategy for Public Participation in Environment and Sustainable Development Decision-Making in the Americas has several components, such as an information network, technical assistance and training, consultative fora to build public-private partnerships, among others.

79. A project proposal, entitled "Environmental Information System for the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) region", was elaborated and submitted to OAS for approval by the Government of Uruguay in 1997, with the support of the OAS office in Uruguay and UNEP, in order to develop and propose alternatives that optimize the use of existing information in the MERCOSUR region (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and systematize the permanent updating of the information. The proposed implementing agencies are OAS and UNEP.

80. OAS invited UNEP to make a presentation on the existing international environmental agreements in August 1998, in Brazil, during the annual inter-American course on international law.

81. A project proposal will be elaborated by UNEP and OAS in the next few weeks, with the objective of creating a data bank on environmental legislation in the Americas as follow-up to an informal agreement initiated between both organizations at the "Workshop on the State of Juridical Information databanks in Mesoamerica", organized by UNEP in Mexico City in November 1997.

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Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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II. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/4

C. Information received from the United Nations system

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

1. In the context of monitoring the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,[1] the Department of Economic and Social Affairs exchanges information on activities related to the implementation of the Programme of Action with the Organization of American States (OAS). This exchange helps keep the organization abreast of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development on issues related to small island developing States. It also helps provide the Commission with current information on the implementation of the Programme of Action in the Caribbean. The Department relies on information from the organization for reporting to the Commission. Since OAS is actively involved in sustainable development activities in Caribbean small island developing States, and is the executor of significant sustainable development projects, the information it supplied has been very useful to the Commission in its deliberations on sustainable development issues related to small island developing States.

2. The Department maintained contacts with OAS and, on several occasions, areas of possible cooperation were explored jointly. OAS participated in a consultative meeting among regional institutions, organized by the United Nations and convened in New York in February 1998, which followed up on decisions taken by the General Assembly during its nineteenth special session, held to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The meeting focused on actions that regional institutions, such as OAS, could take to promote increased regional implementation of Agenda 21 and helped to identify key regional actions that could further sustainable development objectives.

3. Under the United Nations Trust Fund for New and Renewable Sources of Energy established by the Government of Italy, technical cooperation activities have been undertaken to assist small island developing States, including States members of OAS, to promote the use of solar home systems for lighting and for powering small appliances such as radios, televisions, cassette recorders, refrigerators and water purifiers, thereby contributing to improving the quality of life of people living in remote locations and reducing their reliance on imported fossil fuels. Projects have been developed for Grenada and Saint Lucia. Training of personnel is also envisaged under this technical cooperation activity.

4. Exchange of information and substantive reports was pursued with OAS on the advancement of the status of women, youth matters and the eradication of poverty. The youth focal points of OAS participated in the preparations for the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held at Lisbon, Portugal, from 8 to 12 August 1998. OAS attended the international preparatory meetings for the Conference and the Conference itself.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April–6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.